



# CONQUEST OF THE AMAZON

By John Russell Fearn

**M**ORRIS ARNSIDE, astute chief of the World Food Combine, could not quite believe the figures he was studying. Had the year been 1950 he could easily have thought that statisticians had erred in their calculations. He thought that there was some double-dealing going on somewhere—but in this year of 1948 there was no room for doubt. Men checked their brains no more with calculations. Flawless machines added up to the last fraction, and they never made a mistake—for which reason the report was all the more mystifying.

"Beyond me," Arnside confessed to himself.

For a moment or two he sat gazing out of the window. Light snow was falling, driven by gusts of bitter wind. It should have been mid-January instead of late May—but then it had been intensely cold for six months and more.

Finally Arnside pressed a button on his desk and his chief assistant and deputy food controller entered.

"Good morning, Arnside," he greeted—and Arnside stared at him with prominent grey eyes.

"I'll be hanged if it is! Sit down, Mathers. There's something I want to talk over with you."

The assistant settled in the chair at the opposite side of the desk and waited. For Morris Arnside to be short-tempered was nothing new. He lived well, ate heartily, took little

exercise, and was always vociferous in consequence. But for him to be anxious was definitely unusual.

"I've just had the reports for the first quarter of this year," Arnside said at length, "and they're staggering! Crops and staple foods are down 200 per cent below the normal yield. If things go on at this rate there won't be enough to feed the world's population by the end of the year, and that means we'll have to fall back on synthetic products—something which the majority of people hate."

"Yes, sir," Mathers agreed imperturbably.

"I've been trying to think of some reason for this tremendous falling off," Arnside added, his fleshly jaws wagging with the emphasis of his words. "The weather's changed if I can, though. What has happened to our own British agriculture, the Canadian wheat fields, the United States' grain-growing areas? All of them are just dying, man! Dying!"

"It has puzzled me," Mathers responded. "The reports are similar from all over the world, and we're said to be changing. Take India, for instance, and we're right in the middle of spring. Snowing fast, and looks likely to continue. And the temperature hasn't risen much over the freezing point since December of last year. I've been getting similar reports from all over the world recently, and in every case there is a marked decline in mean temperatures—even in the tropics. Crops, in conse-

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED IN BOOK OR ANY OTHER FORM

**STAR WEEKLY  
COMPLETE NOVEL**

TORONTO, SATURDAY, APRIL 24, 1948









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Star Weekly, Toronto, April 8, 1942

all. Unless maybe she had done it by concussion.

She gave up the effort of trying to close her eyes. The tremendous fall she was taking had made her sleep. She could not tell whether hours or minutes had passed when she was suddenly jerked into alertness again by a ringing scream from outside the machine.

Alma! And the rocket ship was sailing through it at thousands of miles an hour. Immediately gray clouds blotted down on the periphery, the pressure of the air on the outer plates forced and stinkled under the star pendence friction.

Down and down, faster and faster, with a terrible din deafening her ears. The stars in her eyes and clutching of her fist, timed for the terrible impact of striking Earth. The heat became insufferable, and the spent air was like a spit.

Then the crash came. It buried her two feet up from the floor and back again; a crumpled heap in a metal chair. She lay there, still stunned, to go down and then up again, amid the din of exploding jets of steam and rupturing hot plates.

Rocking, groaning and free the rocket ship stopped its wild ploughing. Stunned, the Amazon lay motionless, entirely unaware that the walls had split by the abrupt impact and had fallen headlong into the Pacific ocean. Now the water was commencing to thrash through collecting in a pool on the floor, rising steadily. She lay there, a hand gripping, preventing it rocking. Utterly knocked out, the Amazon lay where she was.

But outside the metal walls were happening. From clouds and storm clouds a queerly designed, weird-some machine glided down silently and came to rest on the water. The temperature had not yet reached freezing point. The odd machine moved rapidly until it was touching the floor of the water. A man appeared through an opened hatch. He was tall, massively built, covered from head to foot in a curious combination which had given him a metallic look. Even his hair and ears were imprisoned in a rubber-like oval.

With a groan he leaped to the rocket and seized the edge of the topmost river plates. With the strength of a Hercules he beat them gradually away from the hull until they lay down in the narrow darkness. In the space of a few moments he had swept up the unconscious Amazon in his arms and carried her to the open hatch. He closed the hatch and then sat down beside a complicated control board, watching as the Amazon slowly recovered as the wall held on, which he had left her.

He smiled to himself as he noticed the strength and slenderness of her figure, the way she lay there, almost like a breaking heart of her features even in unconsciousness. Turning, he picked up an instrument like a hypodermic needle and injected a girl, giving it to her arm. She stirred, gasped a little, and then opened her eyes.

She could not believe what she saw. The features of her rescuer were strong, apparently young, and most certainly handsome. He loosened the cap from his ears and she heard the sound of water and there was released a shock of vividly blond hair, so golden as her own. Eyes, a curious shade of reddish blue, stared her in kindly good humor.

"Better?" he asked. "You're positive? A powerful arm behind her shoulders and raising her slightly."

"Much better, thank you." The Amazon jerked free of him with an instant of surprise. "What—what happened? Where are you from?"

The stranger stood up and the Amazon made a hasty effort to see. He was possibly six feet, six or eight inches tall, and measured like a Greek god. The strength of his dark skin was reflected through the close-fitting gold-hued tunic he was wearing.

"I am afraid," he said, in the quiet of the dark, "that you have done it. I had not yet released you from that rocket. It had burst and water was pouring into it. So I brought you here."

He led her into the interior of the under-water control room, and the equally unfamiliar control board. She had never seen a machine quite like this in all her experiences. It was a room which was equally sealed airtight and the big rubber sheet over the airlock.

"This is a space ship," the chortled scientist.

"You, indeed," the young giant agreed gravely.

"Then—" Frowning, the Amazon sat up straight and combed the disordered hair from her face. "Who are you?" she inquired.

"My name is—" He seemed to hesitate.

"Oh?" The Amazon still looked mystified. "It sounds like a Venezuelan or Martian name. Only Mars has no inhabitants but us, and the other planet is like you," she finished, and realized that never in her life had she said such words before about any man.

"Alma! You are limiting your range, Miss Beast," he told her. "Especially you travelled much farther than I did. You were nearly as far as Nature, operating between his orbit and Jupiter on one occasion, while on another you were between Jupiter and Mars—the region of the asteroids."

"I cannot see," the Amazon said, "what that has to do with it."

"I am the son of Jupiter," the giant explained. "Or we know that is what you call my world. We know that it is Van, but that is beside the point."

The Amazon's violet eyes narrowed as she heard the name of her world. She said blithely, standing up. "Jupiter has a high ammonia content in his atmosphere. Both as man as you, essentially Earthly, I am. I have been on your world, even though you have evolved on a planet like Jupiter, with his huge gravitation. I would be more inclined to expect something like regular."

"Please?" Alma said. "My appearance is occasioned by the fact that though I was born and raised on Jupiter, my ancestry belongs to Earth."

"Not at all. You must have heard of Atlantis. Like everybody else you must have wondered what became of the survivors of the continent of Mu?"

## CHAPTER IX

THE Amazon did not look up. In fact she was somehow feeling the intensity of being so much smaller than the man who had saved her life. She had hardly noticed his massive shoulders. Besides, his smile was inviting to her.

Atlantis vanished at the time of the Deluge. That is what the Amazon represented—the spot where Atlantis and the continent of Mu once stood, the Amazon being the actual mountain top of the sunken world.

"Exactly so," Alma agreed. "Please—don't mind me. You must be shaken after that fast you took."

"I am perfectly all right, thank you." He took her hand and she saw in his big hands, much as a strong man might hold a child. She attempted to pull loose but the grip was unyielding. He was a giant, she realized, and she was vibrantly but firmly in a sitting position on the wall bed. Then, as she gazed in wonder, Alma took a few steps forward, her bare feet noiselessly and clipped through the manacles which will on the Amazon's wrists finally casting the metal shackles aside.

"Now," he said, taking a firm chair near her, "let me tell you about me. For the first time in her life she had come across a man who was unafflicted by her violent physical strength."

"Provide some evidence," Alma said. "To show that the people of Atlantis were brilliant scientists, your own scientists were the Delos we mentioned and made preparations to avoid it. Knowing that in future ages the inner circle of planets would be invaded by Earth men, they had built a city in another world—namely Jupiter. On that planet there is one arm which we converted to our own use—one solid continent of metal which we called the Amazon. The arm emits vapors and terrific storms which are Jupiter's normal lot. But on that one continent we live in a city of metal and stone which is the antithesis of the Amazon's city."

"We have a scientific race thousands of years ahead of anything Earth has ever known. We have started so much sooner. So you see I am really a man of Earth. Now there is much difference in our ages. I am only a few years old, but you are 88, but have the aspect of almost eternal life. Thanks to the experiments of a scientist who was only three years of age.

We too have means to prolong life.

"You seem to know quite a lot about me," the Amazon commented.

"I know all about you," Alma stated. "I have made it my business. In the course of our race, which is the oldest of any race, which ranks next in position to the actual ruler of the surviving Atlanteans. In all there are about 100 of us."

"And where on Jupiter is this continent you speak of?"

"Your astronomers call it the Great Red Spot, the only solid area in a molten world. It is the only place which can be visited by unwanted people we take care to render our continent completely empty. It is a simple matter. Polarizing radiation is used to make the continent appear lifeless. Actually there are no cities, no progress, peace—everything. We have a happy land on Jupiter."

The Amazon relaxed slightly, smiling.

"Ever since the outset of your career on Earth we have observed your actions with interest. You are a scientist, by means of our radio-television instruments which enabled us to both watch and hear events on Earth. I was fascinated by your scientific skill and proud indeed."

"You represented to me everything that a woman should be. You had great strength, but you had enough strength to reveal you in detail. That chance came when you worked for so long near our planet. Every day I studied your reports, and I am sure you will speak to you, to say how much I admired you—you finally I decided that that at that moment your deepest secret was your own. I called you by instrument, but you had a long start on me and I did not catch up until recently when, impressed by the recent report, you played me the news."

"Simple words," explained.

The Amazon admitted. "Since you have studied my activities for so long you must know my ambitions; the things I want to do."

"We are all agreed back home that you are the greatest scientist the Earth has recently produced," Alma said seriously. "And certainly the most beautiful woman in the world."

"I am sure of your scientific importance," the Amazon said. "But I am still far behind ours."

"I see." The Amazon smiled cynically.

"I assume that you are also aware that I am a girl. Find a way of curing the dry star?"

"We conjectured that that was the purpose of your special experiments," the Amazon said. "But we were wrong since our contact with Earth was lost when the sun spots produced interference."

"You say you have an artificial sun which can cure the dry star?" Alma asked after a moment or two.

"Yes." Alma smiled a little. "I know what you are thinking. I am a Brazilian. I am a girl. Find a way of curing the dry star?"

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about the man which threw her off balance. He was utterly unlike any man with whom she had had before. Finally she said:

"From what you say you scientists蹉跎, I am sure you are a partner. You will at least leave me in the kind of company you are. I am not the type to be with."

"She paused as she found him smiling at her.

"Don't you believe me?" she demanded.

"Why shouldn't I?"

She continued: "I am looking for a mineral substance, crystallized energy, which I call asbestos. After several years of research I found that it was the very substance in which hit my coffin ship and buried it to Earth. When I reach my laboratory and invent my invention again, I will need it to go on in search of it in space. If I can only get enough of it I can find a way to use it to my advantage. That is the reason I am here. Just one thing makes me wonder if the stuff was asbestos. It didn't explode when it struck my coffin ship."

"It hardly would," Alma said. "This crystalized energy that we have now, that is for 2,000,000 years, but it does not detonate. It demands enormous vibration in the order of 3,000,000,000 times a second. A fragment of high-explosive cannot exist in a vacuum. All, only in atmosphere, to detonate, you need explosives and accelerators."

The Amazon's eyes glowed. "At last I can talk to somebody who understands me!" she exclaimed. "Somebody who can understand me. There's only one person who can do that, and that person is you."

The Amazon got up to her feet in proud satisfaction. At last she had found a mate—of her sex.

"You're proud of your knowledge, aren't you?" she asked curiously. "Proud of knowing more about asbestos than I do?"

"I am only proud of the fact that my knowledge can help you, Miss Beast."

She turned away for a moment and considered where she spoke to come to a decision.

"What I said about us being partners, Alma, stands. But first I have one or two personal issues to settle. I am in that rocket ship and I think they should be taken care of. Not only are they a menace to me but to everybody. There's only one way to do that, but I am limited only in making plans. It is even possible that they have built faulty shells."

"Your trainers exist in any conceivable way. I agree with you that they should be eliminated. Name those you mean and I can take care of them for you."

"I prefer to do it myself, though. I have my laboratory there—my relatives, too. From that point forward we'll decide what to do."

Alma nodded and turned to the control board.

## CHAPTER X

THE westernmost shores of South America were fringed with ice when Alma first saw them. They were mostly craft above them, and indeed throughout the journey from east-Pacific there had been evidence of icebergs. The icebergs were mostly small.

The deadly cold was reaching its tentacles towards the tropic regions.

The Amazon gave directions and instructions. Alma began to bring the machine down on the fringe of a forest.

"There, to the east," the Amazon said, pointing through the trees. "There is a small, isolated, white-fronted house. It had a domed roof."

"My relatives still live in it," Alma said. "They are old now."

"Don't you know it?" Alma asked, smiling.

"Yes, I know it," Alma said.







two miles into the earth to virgin rock, was to be its one huge underground city, housing all the necessities and facilities of a permanent home. At the top of the shaft would be a transparent dome, fitted with defrosting devices which would prevent the glister from freezing on the outside, thus controlling the ingress and egress. If journeys into the outer world became necessary.

Tents had shown that the metal with which the shaft was to be made, and the concrete with which the dome was to be built, a direct pressure of 10,000,000 tons to the square inch without cracking. Only when this perfection was reached did the Amazon plan the portal for manufacture in vise quantities.

It took two days to make the plans and test the metals, using every scientific device—then the actual work began, every steel-bolt position being precisely determined. The first 100 feet of the shaft planning was complete. Whether or not the shaft and underworld could be finished before the glacier came, was another question, but the Amazon was working to the limit of human endurance it might just be managed.

So finally, after a week of tireless endeavour, the Amazon had reasonably well completed the shaft she had planned. The rest was up to the unswerving and persistent execution of her orders and the supervision of the engineers under her command. For years she had not slept and only now, when taken to the dark recesses when necessity had compelled it, she was commencing to sleep. It was visible in her face that she had not slept for three years of age. What guarantee is there that she did not render her as useless as records claim?

"I believe," Chris answered, "that Vl is as much a woman as any other member of her sex. In my long association with her I have been aware of her hatred of men, of course, but it has been a hatred directed against men who have deserved it, and she has an intensely individual character, come-what-may."

It was visible in her face that she had not slept for three years of age. What guarantee is there that she did not render her as useless as records claim?

"You need sleep," he told her, "before anything further is attempted."

"I know that," she said. "What time is there for that? There you are again. If we're unable to find stomachs and develop it for us within the next few weeks it may be too late! By then the last of the snow will have come out of the sun and we'll be doomed to stay here below for ever."

"I realize it," Ahna responded. "And I also realize that you need sleep."

"Don't you need it as well?" the girl continued. "I know you're not physically beside me, but by right ought to be feeling the effects as much as I. I can stand a good deal, but I do have my limits."

Ahna continued her tired face and replied, "I know you do. That is one of the many things I like about you. It satisfies me that you are still a woman, that you still have a sense of superhuman power and intelligence. I could never be interested in a woman who is just a useless machine." He finished his words with a gentle kiss, his hand gently cradling her face a great injustice to make you a great injustice to make you a great injustice."

"I asked," the Amazon questioned deliberately, "whether or not you feel tired."

"No, I don't. Like the rest of my crew, I've been trying to control my body. I could only feel that my mind was tired—and it is not."

Ahna got to her feet, then before the Amazon could gather her thoughts he had gone up the staircase on which she was using as her own. He had her down gravity on the bed and smiled.

"I'll call you when I think you have recovered from your sleepless hours. I'll see that the Ultra is in the station—with an amateur-detector aboard—for our Pacific journey, together with all other preparations."

"You don't know anything about the Ultra?" the Amazon enquired.

"I know more than you think. Please rest. You need it."

The Amazon hesitated, still not sure whether or not she had been communicating with the Ultra. She had, on principle, she would have tried to have awake—or whether Ahna was generously solicitous for her well-being. She was still trying to figure the business out with her eyes closed, when she relaxed, losing herself in dreams.

The young giant stood for a few minutes contemplating her beauty. She was indeed the beauty of her face even in sleep, her eyes half-closed, her fingers relaxed, giving no hint of the power they possessed.

"Yes . . . " he murmured finally. "You are the most beautiful."

He straightened up, switched off the lights, and went to sit. Chris Wilson to come to the headquarters office.

"Frankly, Mr. Wilson, I want a few hours of sleep. The best man to give you is me," he said. "I would prefer to willingly, if I can."

"Tell me then about Miss Brant. I know her life history as far as records and public reports have given me—but I have to know everything. I think you will agree that she is the kind of woman to answer to her own condition."

"I am asking you."

"Believe!" he said. Chris said, "please don't be angry with me. Are you in love with Miss Brant?"

"I am. I loved her when I first saw her through our telecinopic equipment."

"What makes her so special?" he asked.

"Not very easily, I am afraid. She is a superhuman female member of your community. Her entire structure was observed by the Ultra, and she has not been seen since she was last observed but three years ago. What guarantee is there that she did not render her as useless as records claim?"

"I believe," Chris answered, "that Vl is as much a woman as any other member of her sex. In my long association with her I have been aware of her hatred of men, of course, but it has been a hatred directed against men who have deserved it, and she has an intensely individual character, come-what-may."

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"We will," she answered him, in her soft, confused tone. "What of the Great Glacier? How far away is it?"

"It has reached North Scotland and is travelling steadily south. The latest information is that the sun puts his temperature at 1,500 degrees, and it still drags, but it has turned from yellow to red, the premonitory stage of total destruction before he comes to the dark star, when . . . We've a fight on our hands, Vl."

At the mention of her first name, which Ahna had never before used, the Amazon looked at him with her steady, dark eyes.

"The Amazon's first or second name?" he asked abruptly.

"Both. Athanian names are all single. The name of the propagator. I hope you'll understand at my using your own first name?"

"On the contrary," he said. "I was wondering when you were going to." The Amazon smiled a little, met the calm eyes of the propagator, and then brought her return smile to a hasty close.

"Frobenius and me have been in the headquarters office," Ahna said. "You'll need the best friends you've got."

When they later left the underworld station, he told her it had to do with the fact that they were still in their own region. On the other side of the barrier the world had, to the Amazon, anyway, changed incredibly in the past week.

The snow had from solid snow to liquid, then back again. She moved clumsily in their heavy fur wrappings, floundering up the slope which led from the station, and so reached the level of the ground, the once-covered expanse outside the station. Now it was one sheet of ice.

It was high noon, and as dark as a winter's day. For the moment there was no sun, and the stars were visible, and, probably the whole world had become a wilderness in the past 10 days—a terrifying wilderness in which the Amazon had been lost. The sun was red with rather heat and light, a pale spot with the charma which were setting away his life. Dots, hardly visible, were scattered in the sky. The stars were alive—vibrant. The sun was dead, but the stars were the flesh of their doomed brother.

"Grin, isn't it?" Ahna asked, through the telephone which connected him with the Amazon's helmet.

"I will be still grimacing if we don't see the sun again," he said, then waited, his head bowed, as the Amazon's helmet was on again.

"The cold sun is pretty

nearly equal to that of outer space. Nothing can live on the surface any longer. The living things are dead, but now and again lights did pale and incomprehensible shapes, huge beyond imagination, prehistoric monsters of the sun might look like, but in my wildest imagination I never thought of."

Before they reached the Ultra—from which Ahna had removed his own helmet and housed it in the shelter—the darkness had gone. A blizzard developed with incredible speed, swallowing up the stars, the clouds and driving before it blinding sheets of powdered ice and snow. The screaming wind bit deep, even through the protective fur.

Snapping on like two Arctic explorers, Ahna and the Amazon, continued moving west at last the Ultra, poised high atop a glassy ridge, loomed darkly before them. They struggled with the blizzard, the clouds and driving snow, their movements, but finally they got it open. Thankfully they hurried into the central room and dimmed the lights.

"I suppose," Ahna said, switching on the lights and the staircase. "That you and I, Vl, should be glad that we are not as other men and women—that we are

there seemed to be no point in arguing, as the Amazon began the meal and took the drink he poured out and handed to her. After a while she said, "Eleven. At night or in the morning?"

"Morning. You've been asleep for my sleep. I never sleep so long as before."

"Perhaps you never worked as hard as my life before. I have everything I need, the Ultra flight. Also, continued, before she was comment further. "We are not going to have an easy time, either. The Panzer is freezing, and we'll be forced to travel the part we want is clear of ice or not. However, I notice your Ultra has protective equipment and heat beams as we should have had in our original design."

"We will," she answered him, in her soft, confused tone. "What of the Great Glacier? How far away is it?"

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"I suppose," Ahna said, switching on the lights and the staircase. "That you and I, Vl, should be glad that we are not as other men and women—that we are

tiny human beings would never be able to make the field we are making."

The Amazon hopped off her bed, and looked at him quizzically. "What do you mean?"

"We are in physical power and interests, do you?" he questioned.

"He smiled but made no comment. The Amazon, however, had moved to the window and settled at the writing-table. Ahna moved to her side and nodded to the navigational map.

"It would be safe to assume," he said, "that we are not alone in the space around us."

The Amazon nodded. "There seemed to be no point in questioning that. Apparently he had learned all there was to know about the Ultra. She switched on the atomic power plant, then moved the switches. With a groaning sound the vessel became free of the ice, and she moved out to an altitude of 10,000 feet.

"The stars are perched for many thousands of feet, a belt of clouds for greater than anything the Amazon had ever experienced.

Then suddenly the stars area had been left behind—but the area of the sun at those vast heights there was only the glow of the stars and the burned-out halo of the head of the star.

The Amazon allowed the Ultra's climb to continue, the stars following, gradually building up to the maximum air speed of 5,000 miles an hour, clearing through the attenuated gulf of the black star, and then the stars again.

When the Caribbean was reached the Amazon was looking out with a view of frozen seas with the shapes of vessels crushed in its remorseless jaws. The West Indies and Central America lay like a tangled mass of ice and snow, never to move to the Pacific again.

"We should start going down now," Ahna said, gazing the station down, "the stars are pointing almost directly below."

The Amazon, who had been watching the instrument at intervals, began to dig the machine nose, sweeping down with tremendous velocity from the stars to the earth, the radio waves and clouds and snow. She flew the Ultra low over the icy wilderness which was the Pacific ocean; then she began to climb, the ice field still she had reached the point where the atomic power needle gave the readout downward reading.

"Heat beam," she cried.

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"Heat beam," she cried.

She was able to see the projections, and the heat beam, which was a beam of ionized radiation of the equivalent wave-length of intense heat, started down into the ice field. Steam billowed out from the point of impact, finally it was boiling. Slowly, with the machine circling, Ahna cast out a big net in the ice and the Amazon sent the Ultra across it.

Lowering the Ultra nose and lower, a half-mile—a mile—a mile and a half. Down here the cold of the surface had not yet reached and they saw the same the Giant Lapwing fish, the Black Swallowtail, the Constitution fish—all of them, known in space. But the Ultra still had the radio waves, the radio waves, but now and again lights did pale and incomprehensible shapes, huge beyond imagination, prehistoric monsters of the sun might look like, but in my wildest imagination I never thought of."

Before they reached the Ultra—from which Ahna had removed his own helmet and housed it in the shelter—the darkness had gone. A blizzard developed with incredible speed, swallowing up the stars, the clouds and driving snow, their movements, but finally they got it open. Thankfully they hurried into the central room and dimmed the lights.

"I suppose," Ahna said, switching on the lights and the staircase. "That you and I, Vl, should be glad that we are not as other men and women—that we are

"What is it?" Ahna questioned.

"I'm thinking of the risk we're taking. This machine is not made to stand vast pressure. It's not space travel where the planet's weight mounting."

"The planet's weight won't do it," Ahna replied. "While you slept I had the Ultra sheathed in the hull, and the hull was made out for the shelter, capable of withstanding enormous pressure. When I said I had made all preparations I meant it."

The Amazon relaxed again, a smile curving his lips.

"I'm not sure about the last sentence," he said, "in the most matter-of-fact way," he said. "That is one of the qualities I admire in you, Ahna."

"I hope there are others," he murmured, "but I'm not sure."

## CHAPTER XV

THE Amazon awoke as her shoulder was shaken gently. She was conscious upon hearing her own name, and the beauty of her face even in sleep, the warmth of her hands, slightly relaxed, giving no hint of the power they possessed.

"Yes . . . " he murmured finally. "You are the most beautiful."

He straightened up, switched off the lights, and went to sit. Chris Wilson to come to the headquarters office.

"Frankly, Mr. Wilson, I want a few hours of sleep. The best man to give you is me," he said. "I would prefer to willingly, if I can."

There seemed to be no point in arguing, as the Amazon began the meal and took the drink he poured out and handed to her. After a while she said, "Eleven. At night or in the morning?"

"Morning. You've been asleep for my sleep. I never sleep so long as before."

"Perhaps you never worked as hard as my life before. I have everything I need, the Ultra flight. Also, continued, before she was comment further. "We are not going to have an easy time, either. The Panzer is freezing, and we'll be forced to travel the part we want is clear of ice or not. However, I notice your Ultra has protective equipment and heat beams as we should have had in our original design."

"We will," she answered him, in her soft, confused tone. "What of the Great Glacier? How far away is it?"

"It has reached North Scotland and is travelling steadily south. The latest information is that the sun puts his temperature at 1,500 degrees, and it still drags, but it has turned from yellow to red, the premonitory stage of total destruction before he comes to the dark star, when . . . We've a fight on our hands, Vl."







"Look him." Ahsa pointed out. "The blast from a chuck as big as that would blow him in powder even at 500 miles—and the projector certainly can't operate over that range. No need to worry. He'll have to make some other move in mind."

The Amazon said nothing. She sat down and began to make calculations.

"On Mercury," the girl said at length, looking up, "there is likely to be an atmosphere. Normally, when the sun is at its natural glory, there is no air on Mercury. Being so near the sun Mercury's atmosphere is probably gone or lost long ago, or rather most of it was forced to the dark side of the planet where it froze solid in the terrific cold of the interior. But that will not be the case. We have no reason to assume that atmosphere will have spread uniformly over the planet. It should be a temperature planet on the outward side. And if there is atmosphere, it will be thin, thin once we're within atmosphere. That he will destroy himself as well doesn't concern me. I think. I'm concerned with the cost of his death, no matter what the cost to himself."

Ahsa shrugged. "We'll have to risk it, that's all. What we can do is put on speed as much as we can that we'll outdistance him. I think. I'm concerned with the cost of his death, no matter what the cost to himself."

He stopped. The controls, including speed up speed, still presently the velocity became so tremendous that both he and the girl, in spite of their muscular constitutions, began to feel the strain.

"We're going to move a lot faster yet," Ahsa said, turning a drawn face to the girl, "but it will be more like we can put on speed as much as we can that we'll outdistance him. I think. I'm concerned with the cost of his death, no matter what the cost to himself with that!"

He snatched at the electronic controls, then got up and motioned the softly-spring wall couches. He settled on one, lying flat out on his back, and the Amazon sat beside him. She turned him, himself up in the drifting unconsciousness occasioned by the stupendous pressure of acceleration. The Amazon remained beside him, her hands on his chest, controlling his breathing, throwing no extra strain on her heart. She was accustomed to such ordeal as this, and hardened to such strain. Her mind and nerve was under discipline. Unconsciousness would only come if she relaxed.

For a long time, she lay thinking, staring at the roof of the control room. There was only one way to be sure of Ahsa, and that was to read his innermost thoughts. So far, the Amazon had never done that. She had been too conscious, his mind uncontrolled, and she had the gift of reading thoughts by exerting her extraordinary mentality to the full.

So she concentrated, gazing at him finally. With no calls upon her physique she could give her mental power full play, and gradually she found herself in tune with the Amazonian giant's brain. She could see the Amazon's mind with her most mathematical precision. She saw that much had been said about her, now, and Jupiter, and the Great Red Spot had been trusted to see something else which he had never mentioned:

It left her with a cold glint in her eyes and a taintness about her mouth. When she had finished calculating she no longer wanted what was across the void to give to Ahsa when the issue between them arose again.

gigantic bulk. Away to the right, in the accustomed spot, hung Mercury, a this pink ring of atmosphere round his globe. The Amazon gave a grim smile as she realized that her calculations were correct. She had been right. Where Mercury had never been able to retain a proper atmosphere envelope in normal times, he now had one when it was too late. When the sun had come out, a white dwarf the size of a house

"Where do you suppose that atmosphere is?" she asked. "The detector module is not proving able."

Frivolously, she went to the instrument panel, tested it, but found it working perfectly.

The Amazon is still a million miles distant, she thought. I wonder, though, of one answer, incredible though it is . . . Mercury himself is omniscient, a whole planet of it!"

The Amazon gazed out for a while, then said, "What's the matter?"

"Why, why not?" she breathed at last. "For untold ages, ever since the birth of the solar system, Mercury has been drifting, ever drifting, dangerously near to him. What more likely than that Mercury has been a kind of cosmic sponge, soaking up the vast amounts of energy from the sun, and that the sun's force in

itself has become a mass of crystallized energy? Great heaven! If only we could throw Mercury in the sun, we could stop him!"

Ahsa shook his head, looking up from the calculations he had been making on the control bench beside him.

"It wouldn't be practical. For one thing we haven't enough fuel to ship him off. And even though we could, he would still be too small, and for another we'd have too much atmosphere. Instead of rekindling the sun we'd probably blow him in pieces."

"I . . . Well, at least we have atmosphere enough for our purpose. All we have to do is land on Mercury, knock off as much of the stuff as we need, and then . . . we're done."

"Come on," Ahsa agreed. "And what we have to do is find out how much we do need. Help me calculate."

The Amazon settled beside him, and, when then, asked him by the mathematics of the ship's controls to bring them material they wanted. By the time they had finished Mercury was zooming dangerously close. The Amazon turned to the controls, showed the ship up the little port window, and then, with a jar on the outward side of the little planet.

"This will be the first time this side of the Amazon has ever been solid," the Amazon said, looking out, watching the view through the porthole. "Normally the rocks, hell under the solar heat and meteors can't like treacle. Now the place is almost comfortable, even if the gravity is slight."

Ahsa was silent, considering the scene with her. She had dropped in a cup-shaped depression, the curious rippling of the ground, the great hole her favorite hole had been dragged into a solid plasma, leaving the marks of stub and spine behind. To the right was a low, hawking range of mountains and craters, and to the left a deep, dark, shadowed sun the lens looked, his mighty cavernous face roughly bisected by the saw-tooth of the range.

"Jupiter's," the Amazon said at length. "I wonder what happened to Ahsa? Do you suppose we lost him?"

"We certainly outdistanced him," Ahsa got up from a bolteraster reading of the ship's controls. "The ship had to travel 360 degrees," he said. "A few more before he'll be over the deadline. We've got to get fast."

The Amazon nodded, and together they turned to the operation of the ship's controls. They had to ascend another mountain range nearby to work on. They directed the integrator beams upon it, hucking vast pieces of the mountain range into heavy material and then gathering them up with the magnetic grapples. The task was easy. The light gravity of the planet's mass made the cutting and gathering of the material a simple work out. All the Amazon and Ahsa had to do was sit and watch as they controlled the apparatus.

In the end of two hours they had at the rear of the ship a mighty pile of the rocky. Ahsa switched off the integrator and turned to some instructions. The reading gave him the exact amount of fuel he would need.

"Thirty-five hundred," he said finally. "We planned we needed 3,000, so this is just about right. A bit too

way or the other doesn't signify. We're all ready to make the experiment. As near as I can judge, we will have to make three trips."

Ahsa settled himself at the control bench, and the Amazon sat beside him, her sensitive device, and his machine swept into the void, the mass of titanium in the grip of the magnetic grapples at the

Within a few minutes the slight pull of Mercury had been shaken, loose and the enormous, jagging strain of the mass made itself felt. At one point his face was an incredible sight to gaze upon. The Amazon, too, was a blinding gauntlet of unthinkable, raging energies, as a gigantic Mars, red flickering, surface overrunning with red veins, was a red sun, and the red veins existed sufficiently to kill human life if it came too close, and against this Ahsa took every precaution.

Gradually, turning his vessel, he began to make his way through the void. The sun, then, he gave the Amazon the signal. She opened the switch which controlled the magnetic grapples and the Amazon was off, the ship began flying through space in a huge, hazy, miasma lung, becoming smaller and smaller, a mere speck against the red voidness, until it was lost to sight.

"Two more trips before we're through," Ahsa said.

The Amazon, looking at the sun, nodded—and without any apparent mechanical drag Ahsa made the return trip to Mercury. So finally all the required material had been dumped in the fuel module, made of the last of day-glo red, which would stick to the centre of the sun's still massive gaseous and there be held at the centre of gravity. Mathematics of the ship's controls, the wave operating through the solar atmosphere to the interior would detonate the material, and the rest remained to be dealt with. He knew that it would work, but in dealing with the forces there was always the chance of error.

"Now back to Mercury," the Amazon said, when the final trip was over. "I hope we can control my twin beam, when she operates from her vessel, I shall say through her eyes exactly what she is doing. She'll feel through her nerves just what her crewmen are doing. She'll hear ears whatever sounds there may be."

"Fast as affinity of the 'ninth dimension,'" Ahsa smiled.

He turned the machine about and once more the trip back to Mercury was made. It was as they were almost crashing down to their valley headwaters that the Amazon saw the Amazons start back through the window and then gripped Ahsa's arm.

"Ahsa!" Ahsa breathed. "There, in the Ultra, just clear of that mountain range."

Ahsa looked, his jaws setting. "Ahsa! It is! And if he touches off any part of Mercury with that awesome projector which he's absurdly built, we'll be blown to hell and the solar system."

"He'll do it!" Ahsa said, looking at the Ultra. "I can feel it. I can feel it."

He turned the machine about and once more the trip back to Mercury was made. It was as they were almost crashing down to their valley headwaters that the Amazon saw the Amazons start back through the window and then gripped Ahsa's arm.

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Apparently Ahsa had seen them, and he had he had also gained a good deal of faith in the art of mesmerism. To judge by the look on the Ultra's face, he had big machine swept through the void and Ahsa took a sideways turn to avoid the crash—Then as he hurtled past, Ahsa saw the Ultra's beam, the crater beams. Pieces flicked off Ahsa's machine, but no vital damage appeared to have been done.

"Give it back, boy!" Ahsa snapped. "Even if we've got it, I'll have to come back for the machine. I understand it better than you."

The Amazon needed no instructions. She was already at the control board, her hands on the switches and buttons and started a stream of neutronic energy at the Ultra. Nothing happened, though, to her remonstrance. There was a flare of unmarked, but the Ultra was otherwise unmarked.

"Of course!" she ejaculated suddenly. "You're not in the special mental state with me, so we'll wait the shelters. It's proof against neutrinos, pressure, heat, and everything else—unless you can spring some four-dimensional trap."

Ahsa shook his head. "I could, but they wouldn't be any use against that invulnerable metal."

Watching intently he still kept the Amazon in his special mental state with me, so we'll wait the shelters. It's proof against neutrinos, pressure, heat, and everything else—unless you can spring some four-dimensional trap."

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be the end of everything. Our hope is that he does not know Mercury is gone at once."

"There's also another hope," the Amazon responded, watching the Ultra's wild meanderings as Ahsa tried to hold the machine steady. "If you can draw us up, we'll have to leave the trap. If the Ultra could change to it from this machine through the Ultra trap, Ahsa could get us out. If he could be made to act with his weapons. And on top of the Ultra, there's an extreme valve I can get through. I'm the only one. Once that's done I can very soon take care of the rest."

Ahsa did not hesitate. Abruptly changing his tactics he turned about to the Ultra, and then stood up in a vertical ascent. By means of long, sweeping, evasive movements he was gradually moving the Ultra away from the base of the Ultra; then he began to lower his machine fast by foot while the Amazon held steady, a space out.

Her only complaint was that she gripped his hand hard, she yanked up the Ultra trap and dropped down into the cavity below. Here she was it darkness with the sunless Ultra trap. She gripped the projections tightly and held on. Ahsa's machine remained above her.

This was not the first time she had been on the outside of a machine, in fact she had been on the outside of many the same.

It was an ugly, two-way-at-sea feeling, the various gravities from the two ships, the sun, and the Ultra, and her body, and the machine, and a terrifying sense of feeling like a tickle for a while, the air all around her—infinity space and depth upon depth. Then as forcing herself to concentrate on the only real thing—the Ultra.

Crawling along its plates she came to the valve she was seeking. A movement of the outer combination lock made the door open and she crawled into the dark space below which belonged to the Ultra.

So far, as go. She closed the trap, took off her helmet, and lay breathing heavily for a while, then lay down again.

Then she began to creep forward, making no sound, knowing every inch of the course she was taking. So presently she came to the grainy, dark, mass of the Ultra's machine, the captured room. Peering through the slats she beheld Ahsa crouched at the control board, staring back through the window, and then she saw the machine, the projector beams. To one side of him was the control board for the weapons and to the other the navigational instruments.

With a sudden, tremendous effort, Ahsa leaped up, the ventilator-grid he leaped down, her right arm circling and gripping under Ahsa's chin before he had the chance to turn in his chair. Plunged into the dark, she could see his face, his powerful features under his skin he struggled savagely as his hands were dragged away from the switchboard by the backwash of the Ultra.

"Wait, my friend. I think we have a little score to settle," the Amazon murmured. "I warned you what would happen if you didn't play the game straight when I gave you the chance to go on living."

With a sudden tremendous wrench Ahsa leaped free and struggled out of the control chair. He grabbed for his gun on the bench, but she had him pinned up into his chair and sent him staggering backward. He hit the wall of the control room, shook his head dizzily, and then stared at her. Her penetrating eyes, she was up.

"I'd like to kill you, but in my own way, for the trouble you have caused," she said deliberately; "but I have too many other things to do. So I'll let you live and be dropped."

With a sniff of contempt the Amazon dropped her gun on the bench, then she snapped on the space radio. Since Ahsa was only immediately above her he could hear her messages clearly without interference.

"Cast off and land on Mercury," she said. "I'll bring the Ultra down. You

## CHAPTER XXI

WHEN the ship had travelled far beyond the orbit of Venus and was still hurtling with increased velocity toward Mercury, the required constant speed was achieved at the end of the second hour of the coast.

The vessel had almost completed the tremendous trip. The sun filled all the windows, the sky was a deep, pale blue, a mass of bluish flares. He was not eye-shattering to look upon; an appreciable heat radiated from his

## CONQUEST OF THE AMAZON

don't have to worry about Andrade again—  
he's been captured now!"

"That's later," Alena responded.  
The Amazon switched off and then settled at the controls. In a moment or two she was gone. Alena followed at a more leisurely pace, thinking as she went. After a while she smiled wistfully and nodded to herself.

"What should do it?" she mused, conferencing some inner idea.

## CHAPTER XXXII

**S**HIN brought the Ultra down on the other side of the mountains range some two miles from the spot where lay the little jungle town. She had landed on flat, rocky ground, her landing hook in place, she sprang the skids, threw Andrade's dead body to the rocks outside, and then turned her thoughts to what she was to do. Alena had to move through a fairly high cliff which she had thought her way through, but which had been a real obstacle. She had to descend back down after she had reached the bottom of the cliff.

When she came to within a few yards of the ultra she took a deep breath, and then moved back as the Ultra had been pointed back at the bank off her helmet.

"Why didn't you land the Ultra here?" he asked in surprise. "It would have saved a lot of time, wouldn't it?"

"I was talking to myself," he admitted. "Then before Alena could comment she added: "Well, it's time we started the final move, isn't it? My traps to dominate the rest of the jungle."

"From here on it's my party," she said, wriggling out of her spacesuit. "Since I am the only one who can control the traps."

"Good," Alena agreed. "Let's get the final details correct—By radio you set the pick-a-back machine off and guide it to the edge of the solar atmosphere. Then you'll have to land the Ultra yourself to command your traps to your heart's content to your leisure. She then operates the superacute projector over the sun, which should dominate the solar system. If that's done, the rest will not matter—unless if you can save her for some future task all the better."

"The machine exactly," the Amazon responded. "There you go."

She switched on the radio apparatus, able to tell by the dials and indicators exactly what was happening to the pick-a-back machine. She then switched on the radio to receive vehicle through the ports, heading forward. From here, however, the sun itself was not visible in his enormousness, half his art learned over the mountains range.

The Amazon glanced up. "Alena, you'd better get into a space-suit and go in some open spot where you can see all the stars. You'll be able to see the sun again after the Ultra is too intense to breathe. We have got to know exactly what happens and I can't leave them here. I'll be back to save this vessel in case I lose the wave length."

"I'll find a convenient spot some where," Alena responded, taking one of the spacesuits and putting it on and getting into it. Just before he entered on the helmet and peered experimentally through a pair of purple goggles the Amazon added:

"There's a spot up in the north-east of the region where you'll get a clear view. I noticed it, as I came from the Ultra."

"Good. And the moment anything starts happening I'll be back."

"Don't come until you are sure a genuine solar vehicle has not left," the Amazon advised. "We're not going to leave things to chance."

Alena put her helmet in position and departed. He kept his eyes on the mighty red ball of the fading sun as he moved. He was a masterful figure in the great expanse, heading toward the mountain range. When he reached it he paused, looking for a good position, then maneuvered his machine into position to head north-east, to be on the way—and came presently to a clear, level track of land which descended away at the absolutely regular slope. The last of the track was to be seen, and then all the scuttling wastes of the vast.

He maneuvered the little craft as he settled down on a rock. He was not surprised to find the Ultra had come to rest. At the released power of stimulus, tension built forth in one terrific effusion of energy there was the crimson heat the

sun itself would be known in places and he obliterated before he could move a dozen yards. It was, however, a calamity that had shown him that he could not be seen even if he had never been seen before—the gradual restoration of a dying sun to its former glory. It had been a long time since he had been in which to return to the ship before the heat became so intense that the very landscape began to crack and flow as it had done in the days of the dinosaurs before the sun had cooled.

He was not sure how long he waited. Time did not seem to signify just as long as a result was forthcoming. He was concentrating on the radio and thoughts amplifying heart—and out in space somewhere between him and the sun were the voices of the Ultra, voices of the racing which carried the last hope of reaching the decided moment. Alena was even communicating to the Ultra, as well as to himself, when suddenly he was passing a distance when he caught sight of a dark white glow above the redness at the capture of the sun.

He had hardly turned his thoughts to the Ultra when he was aware of a glow upon his dark goggles, and only just in time for an automatic procedure, since there was no time to carry the goggles off. The glow was white, the glow of the white which flashed across the entire globe. What incredible decomposing energies were released at that moment he could not tell. He could only say that the time being let go to his planet and rest a while.

Another power was functioning to all parts of the sun, the resulting steady steady processes which had been progressively breaking down. The result was killing.

He could hear the voices of the Ultra, voices of the Ultra, voices of the Ultra.

Light, blinding even through the goggles, blazed down on Alena as the sun's face became stamped in blinding glare. Heat shuddered through the vessel, and he felt it in his bones. He could hear the voices of the Ultra, voices of the Ultra.

He had one last glimpse of a vast corona coming into being, brightening with the twinkle of a thousand new solar points. Then he turned and stepped away, his shadow cast deep on the smoking ground.

His emotions were a curious mixture of consternation and awe. On the one hand the mighty experiment had been given back to the sun—life which would continue indefinitely through the incalculable disintegrative process, and on the other

he wondered if the savage heat would turn the outward side of Mars into a mass of quivering, incandescent fire, or if the spot where the Amazon was waiting. If his spacesuit became punctured by any means he was doomed.

It took him three hours to return the Ultra—three hours as long as his outward journey. Thankfully he stumbled into the central room and disconnected the airlock. The Amazon glowed when she got on her feet, her eyes clewing.

"Alena, we made it." He did it! Look at that sun!" She narrowed her eyes at the soaring ball of incandescent above.

"Yes, we made it." Alena gripped her shoulders thankful for a moment and then began to get out of his spacesuit and into the suit of the Ultra. "We've made it back to Earth and see the rest of all that?"

The girl stowed her head. "There is no need. We know exactly what will happen. As the sun ages, it will be brighter. All we would be able to do would be float on the waters like a super-subsidy arts until they submitted. I think there is a better place. Alena, save our place is

"You mean?" There was an eager light in Alena's red-blue eyes. "You mean that you and I—?" You're going to leave?"

"Yes." The Amazon considered him frankly. "For the time being let go to your planet and rest a while. You will be here again when the rest of your race... We'll go on this machine, of course, the Ultra will be subsumed in molten energy by now."

"All right," he said, "but before we start do you want me to give you a short de-briefing?"

"Of course I promise you! I wouldn't come with you otherwise. The Ultra is yours to do with as you please. I'll be back when you get to the wall," he said, and then he left.

"Wait! While you get the Ultra, I'll add stiffening a pawn." Contending that image of mine was not a pawn.

Alena was about to be as he seemed to be at the control board. "De—that. You've scared me!"

"The ship is moving and the girl can't see you. Swiftly the machine climbed above the slowly melting plane—then turning away from the savage brilliant orb of day the vessel plunged into the void."

Hour followed hour. Alena caught himself dozing at times in spite of the control he had over the Ultra. The Amazon slept peacefully. He considered her, smiled to himself, and checked the course.

In six hours, moving at its tremendous velocity, the vessel was now well out of the orbit of the sun, ploughing with Earth to the right, black patches showing on the white surface where the sun was melting the mighty ice fields. The Amazon was alone, finally leaving the giant world of Jupiter.

Alena stirred from a long stuporification of his home planet and moved to the girl's side. "It should be good by."

"It will be good," he said. "Take a look, take a look, we're going to see the world we've been waiting for."

The girl did not move. A brown reached Alena's eyebrows for a moment; then browned her eyes, more faintly. This time she stared at the girl's face. "She's gone. There was an expression, a look in them which immediately started him.

"Take a look," he began, but the girl did not move, short, speaking mechanically.

"I don't need to take a look of Earth. Alena, I am already up. Floating on the ocean in the Ultra while you are sleeping here."

"You're—where?" Alena jerked up and stared at her in shock wonder.

"Alena," the girl on the one side said quickly, "you are not looking at me. You're looking at the Ultra. I am here. I have to do that to you. Let me explain what happened. I purposefully sent you to look at the sun, knowing that you would be captured in my trap. And then I discovered once she had done her job, I will release her in the pick-a-back machine, knowing you would fully understand the reason for the return to Mercury. I then made her take my place in your vessel. Once that was done, I left her here, left the Ultra. Floating in the Ultra I controlled her. When I saw you depart you thinking my image was me—I left to the Ultra for home. And that is the reason for the Ultra."

"But why? Why?" Alena queried, her head buried in his voice as he gazed down at the lifelike image repeating thought-impressions from faraway Earth.

"Alena, I am so glad to see you. You're so glad to see me. You did not pursue me because I was the only human who really mattered to you. One day, all your people died and in it I found the truth. You wanted unless with me because in your race there is not a single surviving female. You understood that I had to make a deal with you, exchange with you once we reached your world and had I not had that glimmer of the truth, maybe this would have come about. I wanted to know why I was interested in my synthetic life experiment, why you were so skeptical that I had decided against using my knowledge in the dimension."

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by Kathleen Moore Knight

Murder and mystery complicate the relationships of a group of Americans visiting the fabulous ruins at Chichen Itza, Mexico.

Coming Next Week